



# THE REPERCUSSIONS OF DIVORCEE REMARRIAGE ON CHILDREN'S WELLBEING: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

Ngurthangpuui<sup>1</sup>, Dr. S.T Akilan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Madras

<sup>2</sup> Research Supervisor and Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Madras

## ABSTRACT

Divorcee remarriage is a common phenomenon in modern society, with significant repercussions on children. While remarriage can provide a sense of stability and companionship for adults, its repercussions on children's well-being can be complex and far-reaching. This conceptual study aimed to explore the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children's wellbeing using an integrated framework that combines Family System theory, Social Learning Theory, and Attachment Theory. The findings suggest that children's well-being is influenced by a range of factors, including family dynamics and relationships, parent-child relationships, social support and networks, children's coping mechanisms and resilience, and attachment style. The study highlights the need for further research on this topic and provides a foundation for understanding the complex dynamics involved.

**KEYWORDS:** Divorcee Remarriage, Repercussions, Children's Well-Being, Conceptual Study, Theoretical Framework

## INTRODUCTION

Divorcee remarriage has become increasingly common, with approximately 40% of marriages in the United States involving a previously married partner (American Community Survey, 2019). The rise in divorcee remarriage has led to an increase in stepfamilies, with approximately 16% of children living in stepfamilies (Pew Research Center, 2019). While remarriage can provide a sense of stability and companionship for adults, its repercussions on children's well-being can be complex and far-reaching (Amato, 2001; Anderson, Greene, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1999). Despite its prevalence, the impact of divorcee remarriage on children remains a topic of concern and debate.

A comprehensive literature review was conducted to identify key concepts and theories related to divorce remarriage and its effects on children. The review reveals that children who experience their parents' divorce and remarriage are at increased risk for emotional distress, anxiety, and depression and behavioural issues (Amato, 2001; McLanahan, 1999). Children may experience difficulty adjusting to the new family dynamics, including the introduction of a new stepparent and potentially new stepsiblings (Whelan & Hochschild, 2013). Furthermore, children may experience loyalty conflicts between their biological parents and their stepparents, leading to emotional distress and anxiety (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991). Children of divorcee remarriage may experience difficulty in forming healthy relationships in adulthood, including romantic relationships and relationships with their own children (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Besides, children of divorcee remarriage may be at increased risk of substance abuse and addiction (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). Conflict between parents and stepparents can negatively impact children's wellbeing (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).

This conceptual study aims to explore the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children's well-being using an integrated framework that combines family system theory, social learning theory, and attachment theory. The study will provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors that influence children's well-being in the context of divorcee remarriage.

Theoretical frameworks, such as family system theory, social learning theory, and attachment theory, can provide a comprehensive understanding of the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children's well-being. Family system theory posits that the family is a complex system with interconnected components that influence one another (Bowen, 1966). Social learning theory suggests that children learn new behaviors and attitudes by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1977). Attachment theory posits that children form emotional bonds with their caregivers, which influence their emotional and psychological development (Bowlby, 1969).

## Method used

This conceptual study employed a comprehensive theoretical framework to explore the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children's wellbeing, the framework integrated concepts from Family System Theory, Social Learning Theory, and Attachment Theory.

## Theoretical Framework:

This conceptual study employed an integrated framework that combines family system theory, social learning theory, and attachment theory to explore the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children's wellbeing.

1. Family system theory: Family system theory, developed by Murray Bowen (1996), views the family as a complex

system with interconnected components that influence one another (Bowen, 1966). The theory suggests that changes in one part of the system can have a ripple effect throughout the entire system. In the context of divorcee remarriage, family system theory suggests that the remarriage can disrupt the family system, leading to changes in family dynamics, roles, communication patterns and relationships. Children may struggle to adjust to these changes, leading to emotional distress and behavioural problems (Bray, 1999).

2. **Social Learning theory:** Social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977) posits that children learn new behaviors and attitudes by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1977). In the context of divorcee remarriage, social learning theory suggests that children may learn new behaviours and attitudes by observing their parents interaction and relationships, also conflicts resolution strategies in the new marriage. This theory clearly demonstrated that children are at higher risk of learning conflict resolution strategies by observing their parents and stepparents interactions. However, they may also learn negative behaviours, such as aggression or avoidance, isolated, and self centered behavior, if they observe conflictual or distant relationships between their parents and stepparents.
3. **Attachment theory:** Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby (1969) and Mary Ainsworth (1978), posits that the quality of the parent-child relationship is critical for children's emotional and psychological development. In the context of divorcee remarriage, attachment theory suggests that children may experience attachment insecurity or disruption due to the changes in their family dynamics and relationships. Children who experience insecure attachment with their parents may struggle to form healthy relationships with their steps-parents. Conversely, children who experience secure attachment with their parents may be more resilient in the face of changes in their family dynamics.

## RESULTS

The integrated framework revealed several key findings regarding the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children's well-being:

1. **Family Dynamics and Relationships:** The remarriage can disrupt the family system, leading to changes in family dynamics, roles, and relationships (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Children may experience difficulty adjusting to the new family dynamics, including the introduction of a new stepparent and potentially new stepsiblings (Buchanan, Maccoby, & Dornbusch, 1991). Children's adjustment depends on their age, personality, and individual circumstances. On the other hand ongoing conflict between parents can negatively impact children's adjustment. Meanwhile, a strong positive relationship between the child and custodial parent can facilitate adjustment (Christina, 2001). Children of divorcee remarriage are more likely to form unhealthy relationships in adulthood, which includes romantic relationships and relationships with their own children (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002).

2. **Parent-Child Relationships:** The quality of the parent-child relationship can influence children's emotional and psychological well-being in the context of divorcee remarriage (Amato, 2001). Children who experience a positive relationship with their parents are more likely to adapt to the remarriage and experience better emotional and psychological well-being. According to a study of Drexler, 2005, Sons that are raised by mothers only may develop emotional sensitivity to others that is beneficial in relationships than sons that are raised by fathers only. Conflict between parents and stepparents can negatively impact children's wellbeing (Ganong & Coleman, 2004).
3. **Social Support and Networks:** Children's social support and networks can influence their ability to cope with the changes associated with divorcee remarriage (Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989). Children who experience a strong support system, including friends, family members, and teachers, are more likely to adapt to the remarriage and experience better emotional and psychological wellbeing (Tylor, 2010).
4. **Children's Coping Mechanisms and Resilience:** Children's coping mechanisms and resilience can influence their ability to adapt to the changes associated with divorcee remarriage (Hetherington & Kelly, 2002). Children who experience a high level of resilience and effective coping mechanisms are more likely to adapt to the remarriage and experience better emotional and psychological wellbeing.
5. **Attachment Style:** Children's attachment style can influence their ability to adapt to the remarriage and experience better emotional and psychological well-being (Bowlby, 1969). Children who experience a secure attachment style are more likely to adapt to the remarriage and experience better emotional and psychological well-being. Children are likely to develop stronger and positive relationships with the custodial parent especially if the parent has remarried.
6. **Emotional Distress:** Children may experience emotional distress, anxiety, and depression due to the remarriage (Amato, 2002). Children of Divorcee remarriage may feel anxious about their own relationships due to fear of divorce or setting higher expectation. Besides, children of divorcee remarriage may be at increased risk of substance abuse and addiction (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).
7. **Economic or occupational status:** Children of divorcee remarriage may experience lower level of education and occupational status due to financial status. The effects may vary from children to children depending on the economical status of their parents.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this conceptual study highlight the importance of considering the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children's well-being. The integrated framework provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex factors that

influence children's well-being in the context of divorcee remarriage. The findings suggest that children's well-being is influenced by a range of factors, including family dynamics and relationships, parent-child relationships, social support and networks, children's coping mechanisms and resilience, and attachment style.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research, which has shown that children who experience their parents' divorce and remarriage are at increased risk for emotional distress, anxiety, and depression. Furthermore, they are likely to have adjustment problems with their new stepparent and stepsiblings (Amato, 2001; Anderson, Greene, Hetherington, & Clingempeel, 1999).

The findings of this study have several implications for practice, policy, and future research:

1. Providing counseling and therapy services for children and Families: Counseling and therapy can help children and families adjust to new family dynamics (Kessler, 1975)
2. Developing educational programs for parents and stepfamilies: Educational programs can help parents and step parents understand the needs and provide support (Visher & Visher, 1996)
3. Promoting social support networks for families: Social support networks can provide emotional and practical support to families (Cohen, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

This present study demonstrated various significant repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children and the repercussions that children adopt may vary from one child to the other depending on the coping mechanism supplied by their parents. The most highly affected of divorcee remarriage on children can be emotional distress and behavioral problems. Consequent to the result and aftermath, if are not under a proper control by their parents it can be associated with a broken parent- child relationship. This study addresses the importance of caregivers and how the children wellbeing is influenced by their parents' actions towards the existing problems in the family. The neglected spark problems of children by their parents can be considered as the main sources of social problems. Therefore, this conceptual study provides a foundation for understanding the repercussions of divorcee remarriage on children. It highlights the need for further research on this topic, particularly in the context of Indian society. Further studies can use this framework to guide their research and explore the complex dynamics involved in divorcee remarriage and its effects on children.

## REFERENCES

1. Amato, P.R. (2001). Children of divorce in the 1990s: An update of the Amato and Keith (1991). Meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15(3), 355-370.
2. American Community Survey. (2019) Remarriage in the United States.
3. Anderson, E.R., Greene, S.M., Hetherington, E.M & Clingempeel, W.G.(1999).The effects of marital conflict and divorce on children. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 13(2), 179-193.
4. Bandura, A. (1977).*Social Learning Theory*. Eaglewood cliffs Prentice Hall

5. Bowlby,J. (1969).*Attachment and Loss: Vol.1 Attachment*. New York : Basic Books
6. Bowen, M. (1966). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. Jason Aronson
7. Bray, J.H.,(1999). From marriage to remarriage and beyond: A review of the literature. *Journal of Family Issues*, 20(3). 357-378
8. Buchanan, C.M., Maccoby, E.E., & Dornbusch, S.M.(1991), *Caught between parents: Adolescents' experienced in divorce homes*. Harvard University Press.
9. Cohen, S. (2004). Social relationships and mortality: An analysis of the National Longitudinal study to Adolescent Health. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* , 8(1), 1-13
10. Ganong, L.H., & Coleman, M.(2004)*Remarriage and re-partnering: A review of the literature*. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(5), 663-687
11. Hetherington, E. & Kelly, J. (2002). *For better or for worse: Divorce reconsidered*. W.W. Norton & Company.
12. McLanagan, S.(1999). Father absence and the welfare of children. In E.M Hetherington (ed.), *coping with divorce, single parenting, and remarriage* (pp. 177-145). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
13. Kessler, R.C.(1975). The effects of divorce on children. *Journal of marriage and family*, 37(3), 531-544
14. Pew Research Center (2019) *Remarriage and re-partnering in the United States*, April 9, 2019.
15. Tylor, S.E. (2010). Social support. In A J.Manuto (Ed.), *The oxford handbook of healthy psychology*